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Passport to Perris Tour

Representatives of an agency promoting travel and tourism came to Perris recently and got a first-hand look at the "hidden gems" that make the City a destination for visitors throughout California.

Ashley Harrison and Kenny Langwasser, who represent the non-profit agency "Discover IE," visited Perris entertainment landmarks like the Big League Dreams sports complex, the DropZone aquatics center, the Perris Auto Speedway and Skydive Perris.

The pair, traveling with a group of Perris supporters from the Chamber of Commerce, small businesses, local historians and members of the Chamber of Commerce, also stopped by City Hall, the Perris Valley Museum, the Motte Family Museum and the Orange Empire Railway Museum. Discover IE promotes events and places in Riverside and San Bernardino counties.

The non-profit is funded by Visit California, an online visitor's guide that highlights the Golden State.



Perris Redevelopment and Economic Development Manager Michael McDermott addresses a crowd of business owners, historians and tourism representatives during last week's visit to the City, aimed at raising the profile of Perris' points of interest.

Harris and Langwasser came away impressed. They said that with all its entertainment, family and historical venues, Discover IE will use social media and Blogposts to promote Perris as a destination spot for visitors wanting to spend a weekend in the City.

"Perris is awesome!" Harrison said after leaving the Perris Valley Museum. "I love the history and culture."

Langwasser said Perris offers "a big variety of places and activities for a small town."

"It was very good to see an assortment of venues that are represented in Perris," he said. "I liked seeing all the venues, from sports to historical and educational. There is a lot to attract people to the City of Perris."

Promoting the City is critical for tourism and business development, said Ali Mazarei, president and chairman of the Perris Valley Chamber of Commerce.

The recent limousine tour of the town was meant to reinvigorate the "Passport to Perris" program, a private-public partnership meant to promote tourism and tourist venues in the City. Mazarei addressed the 15 Perris supporters and visitors during a lunchtime stop at the Bomb Shelter restaurant at the Perris Valley Airport.

"We must cross-market," Mazarei said. "We're here to promote each other and help each other."



The group of visitors stopped by the Perris Auto Speedway and were photographed on the victory podium.

The tour was organized by Cindy Espinoza, Chamber Board Member and general manager of the Red Lion Inn and Suites. The Red Lion Inn and Suites is very supportive of the Passport to Perris marketing program and is working with the varied venues to perhaps offer special hotel pricing and packages.

The City will do what it can to assist but tourist venues and related business should take the lead, said Michael McDermott, the City's redevelopment and economic development manager. McDermott said Perris will make available its CityByAppPerris, which puts a wide assortment about the City on Iphones and Good Play for Androids. Business owners could advertise their companies for \$99 annually.

"We support businesses but the venues themselves must be the drivers," he said. "Businesses are the natural fit to run this effort."

The day was a learning experience from start to finish. At the Perris Valley Museum, the residents and visitors learned about the history of the Perris Valley from the time the Good Hope Gold Mine yielded millions to the days when Perris was an agricultural hub of Southern California to the period when intrepid pioneers forged a community using hard work and enterprise. At the Perris Valley Airport, the group learned that military personnel from all over the Earth train at the world-renown skydiving center. Paratroopers from Qatar were training the day the group arrived.

At the Perris Auto Speedway, facilities manager Charlie Watson described how the track has become known throughout the racing world, attracting 20 drivers who went on to participate in NASCAR racing or the Indy 500. Watson thanked the City for its support of the half-mile oval, which includes sponsoring the annual July 4 fireworks show and concert.

"We can't say enough about the City of Perris," Watson said. "They've been great partners."

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